For over 150 years, providing fish passage over human-made dams and other fish passage barriers has been required in Oregon. Many landowners have fish passage barriers on their properties and may not even realize it. In 2019, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife inventoried over 40,000 artificial barriers across the state and compiled a list of nearly 600 prioritized for removal. Prioritization was based, among other factors, on the quality and quantity of native migratory fish habitat that lay inaccessible beyond these barriers. Thirty-two of these high-priority barriers are found within the Rogue River Watershed Council’s working territory.

These artificial barriers exist in many forms. Irrigation diversion dams—including push-up dams—and culverts are the barriers most often encountered in the middle and upper Rogue Basin.

Contact us today to discuss a fish passage project on your property.

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Prioritization is Key

This push-up dam, installed for irrigation purposes, prevents salmon and other fish from moving upstream to cooler waters during summer’s heat.
Questions You May Have . . .

If you’re a landowner with a high-priority fish passage barrier on your property, you might have some questions. Here are some of the most common questions we are asked when talking about fish passage projects.

Q: Am I going to be required to pay for the project?
A: We work to find funding from private foundations and other funders to complete the various aspects of the project. Some of these grants may ask for landowner contributions, but often times this can be accomplished through in-kind donations, such as equipment, labor, and the like.

Q: How long will the project last?
A: Prior to any on-the-ground work, there is much to do in terms of soliciting funds, designing the project, and acquiring the necessary permits. This can easily take one to two years. However, once actual removal begins, projects proceed quickly; we usually have all of the construction work done in a few weeks.

Q: What about irrigation? Am I going to be without water?
A: No, you will have access to your water right during the project, and most of our barrier projects include some type of improvement in irrigation efficiency through construction of new intake systems or pipes.

Q: Am I going to see salmon and steelhead in my stream after this?
A: All of our fish passage projects open up habitat important for the survival of salmon and trout; and although these fish will travel upstream of the former barrier, whether you see them or not is beyond our control!